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RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KABUL 003099

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EEB/TRA, S/SRAP, SCA/FO, SCA/RA, SCA/A
DEPT PASS FAA FOR RAY SMITH

E.O. 12958 N/A

TAGS: [EAIR](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: FIRE ON SAFI AIRWAYS PLANE CARRYING AFGHAN FOREIGN
MINISTER

¶1. (U) Summary: The landing gear of a Safi Airways Boeing 737 flying Oct. 3 from Dubai to Kabul caught fire immediately upon landing at Kabul International Airport (KIA). No passengers were injured and the crew quickly and safely evacuated the plane. Foreign Minister Spanta was on the flight, returning from the United Nations General Assembly; he was next to the President of Safi Air. Airport emergency crews reacted promptly to the fire, but were unable to move the plane. As a result Kabul's single runway was blocked for three hours. End summary.

¶2. (U) According to Safi Airways President Tilmann Gabriel, who was a passenger on the plane, the left landing gear of the Dubai - Kabul flight locked and caught fire following touchdown Oct. 3 in Kabul. Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation (MOTCA) inspectors contracted via the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) preliminarily found an anti-skid system failure caused the left main wheels to lock during landing, resulting in brake overheating and tire failure. Gabriel could not provide details of the plane's maintenance history but said Safi replaces tires more frequently than required due to the rough runway surface at KIA.

¶3. (U) ISAF fire fighters quickly responded and recommended passengers evacuate. Gabriel said all passengers were off the plane within five minutes. He and Spanta, who were seated in business class, were the last to exit. All passengers were evacuated through the rear exit after wind flipped over the inflated forward exit slide.

¶4. (U) Due to severe tire damage, the plane could not taxi off the runway after the fire was extinguished. Afghan National Police cordoned off the area while Safi maintenance staff replaced the tire. The repair work closed the sole runway at KIA for more than three hours, delaying commercial and cargo flights. (Note: no combat flights use KIA. End note.) Two Embassy Air and one INL Air flights were diverted to Bagram Air Field.

¶5. (U) According to Gabriel, Foreign Minister Spanta called the chairman of Safi's board Oct. 5 to compliment the crew on its efficient reaction. The plane returned to service within 24 hours. Ministry of Transportation inspectors are completing their investigation of the incident.

EIKENBERRY